

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 15752 031551Z

47

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6206

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY LIMA

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CI, UK, ELAB, PINT

SUBJECT: ITF MISSION TO CHILE

REF: LONDON 15575

BEGIN SUMMARY: HAROLD LEWIS, ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION, HAS INFORMED US THAT THE ITF EXECUTIVE WILL DECIDE IN JANUARY WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH ANOTHER DELEGATION TO CHILE, ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVES THE DECISION IS LIKELY TO BE IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. JONES, THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION, WITH WHOM LEWIS RETURNED TO LONDON, TOOK A RELATIVELY COOL VIEW OF THE MISSION'S FORCED TURN-AROUND WHEN HE ADDRESSED THE LABOR CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY (NOVEMBER 30), ALTHOUGH HE MADE A DRAMATIC PLEA FOR HELP TO "OUR FRIENDS IN CHILE IN THE FIGHT TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY." (FULL TEXT AND NEWSPAPER STORIES OF THE ABORTIVE MISSION BEING POUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT AND TO EMBASSY SANTIAGO). END SUMMARY

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PAGE 02 LONDON 15752 031551Z

1. LEWIS TOLD US THAT IF THE ITF DECIDES TO SEND A

DELEGATION TO CHILE AFTER THE ILO DELEGATION COMPLETES ITS MISSION - AS WAS SUGGESTED TO HIM AND JONES BY THE CHILEAN MINISTER OF LABOR, AIR FORCE GENERAL NICANOR DIAZ ESTRADA - "IT WON'T BE ON THE GENERAL'S TERMS." LEWIS SAID THAT THE ITF "WILL MAKE SURE THAT WE SEE WHOMEVER WE WANT TO SEE RATHER THAN ALLOW THE GENERAL TO DECIDE."

2. LEWIS SAID THAT HE AND JACK JONES DID MANAGE TO VISIT WITH THE CHILEAN COMMITTEE FOR PEACE, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS AN ECUMENICAL BODY, UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE CARDINAL OF CHILE, WHICH IS SEEKING, AMONG OTHER OBJECTIVES, TO HELP SECURE THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL AND TRADE UNION PRISONERS. ACCORDING TO THE ITF ASSISTANT SECRETARY, THE COMMITTEE LEADERS TOLD JONES AND LEWIS THAT THE RATE OF ARRESTS AND DISAPPEARANCES HAS BEEN MOUNTING DURING THE LAST THREE MONTHS AND THAT THE COMMITTEE IS CONCERNED WITH "ABOUT 6,000 CASES."

3. JONES TOLD THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE (SEPTTEL): "THE GENERALS ASKED US TO LEAVE AND COME ANOTHER DAY..." WITHOUT INDICATING WHETHER THE ITF WILL TAKE UP THE INVITATION, HE WENT ON TO PAINT A BLEAK PICTURE OF THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN CHILE, INCLUDING "DESTRUCTION OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS," AND THE CONTINUED ARREST AND RE-ARREST OF CHILEANS "WITHOUT CHARGE." HE SAID HE HAD HANDED TO GENERAL DIAZ A LIST OF TRANSPORT WORKERS WHO ARE IN PRISON OR DETENTION CENTERS AND HAD DEMANDED INFORMATION ABOUT THEM.

4. COMMENT: THE REACTION OF THE DELEGATION TO THE TURN-AROUND CONTRASTS TO SOME EXTENT WITH THE INITIAL REMARKS OF THE ITF GENERAL SECRETARY CHARLES BLYTH (REFTEL). ALTHOUGH JONES COULD HAVE EASILY USED THE OCCASION OF THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE TO BLAST THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT FOR ITS REFUSAL TO ALLOW THE MISSION TO PROCEED, HE REFRAINED FROM DOING SO. HIS RESTRAINT IN THIS MATTER THUS HELPS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR ANOTHER TRY, PERHAPS EARLY NEXT YEAR.

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PAGE 03 LONDON 15752 031551Z

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